

easy, but listening to those who disagree with us and working on the differences is the hard work of government.

I remind my colleagues on the other side that the word "congress" is derived from a Latin verb meaning "to walk together." We have already made cuts to the President's budget. We have already made real cuts in this year's spending. We have offered a reasonable compromise that seeks even more cuts but, more importantly, a compromise that seeks common ground, not capitulation, and neither should our colleagues expect capitulation. All we ask is that those on the other side do what is right and act in the broader interests of the Nation, not shut down the government, disrupt services, and put the economic recovery at risk, all to satisfy a narrow political agenda.

I know there was a lot of fanfare on the Republican budget proposal that was put out as we look to the next fiscal year. In my view, it is by far one of the most partisan, ideological, and fundamentally destructive budgets I have seen in my time in Congress—destructive of fundamental protections for every American and for what we have come to accept as fundamental protections that are uniquely American.

It fundamentally takes \$1.5 trillion out of health care for seniors and children, and it gives it to the wealthy. It would take health care from seniors and children rather than take subsidies from special corporate interests such as big oil companies. If Republicans got their way, New Jersey residents would lose \$34 billion in health benefits, and almost 400,000 New Jerseyans would see their coverage cut entirely.

The Republican proposal talks about cutting taxes, but in reading it, I find only two groups whose taxes would be cut: the rich and those who are even richer. Corporations and millionaires and those soon-to-be millionaires will keep all of their recent tax giveaways and would actually see their tax rates slashed by 30 percent. This proposal loses \$700 billion on the revenue side over the next 10 years by extending the Bush tax cuts, particularly to the wealthiest in the country, and trillions more by slashing tax rates for corporations and millionaires. Those making more than \$1 million a year will see tax cuts of \$125,000 each from the tax cuts and tens of thousands of dollars more from proposed rate cuts, while people in my State would lose \$34 billion in health benefits, and 400,000 New Jerseyans end up without health coverage at all.

This budget proposal shifts the balance to the wealthy and makes cuts that do not reflect our values as a people and as a nation. At the top of the list of Draconian Republican cuts is Medicare. Let's for a moment look at the logic of the Republican budget proposal when it comes to Medicare, a program that since 1965 has protected seniors and made sure no older American would be without health care when they need it the most.

In 1965, we passed Medicare. Why? Because senior citizens could not get health insurance. And the reason health insurance companies would not take the risk of insuring older Americans, who, logically, would need to see doctors and receive treatment more often than younger Americans, is rather clear. Even if there were such a plan, the cost would be prohibitive for a senior on a fixed income. So we created Medicare, and today it is one of our most successful programs. No senior is left without access to lifesaving, life-enhancing drugs or the care they need.

What are the Republicans proposing in this budget? They are proposing to end Medicare as we know it. In fact, they want to privatize Medicare, and they say their privatization plan is just a way of asking wealthier seniors to pay more. But let's ask ourselves, logically, how much do we think an insurance company will charge in premiums to a 65-year-old American male who may have had a heart attack or heart ailment or suffers from diabetes. How outrageous do we suppose the premium will be, and how much of a voucher will that 65-year-old American need to purchase even a minimal health care plan? That logic escapes me. Today, buying a private plan on the open market for a self-employed, middle-age couple can cost as much as \$18,000 a year. The average retiree in America is living on about \$19,000 a year. So, again, the logic escapes me. The fact is, this proposed privatization plan for Medicare completely overlooks the history of why we needed Medicare in the first place. It illogically assumes insurance companies will provide quality health care coverage at a huge discount to older Americans. If that is not wishful thinking, I don't know what is.

Let me close by simply saying that it is time to make sure this government stays open, it is time to make sure we don't thrust the economy backward, and it is time to ultimately ensure that those who have given service to this country, such as the men and women in uniform, don't get hurt, and that we do by coming together on a reasonable budget.

EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that there be a period of morning business until 5 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Utah.

BUDGET NEGOTIATIONS

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, I could not agree more that we should not have a government shutdown. I could not agree more that we need to take steps to protect and improve our economy. I could not agree more that we need to take steps to make sure our brave uni-

formed men and women are fairly compensated and otherwise treated. I must, however, express my profound, albeit respectful, disagreement with my colleague, the junior Senator from New Jersey.

This is not a possible shutdown that we are facing as a result of the Republican Party or as a result of the tea party. As a lifelong Republican and as a founding member of the Senate Tea Party Caucus, I can tell you unequivocally that there is not one member of this body, nor is there one member of the Senate Tea Party Caucus who wants a government shutdown, certainly no Republican. From the outset, Republicans have attempted to bring forward proposals to make sure we do not get into a shutdown.

The question we need to ask ourselves is, Why does the President of the United States, President Barack Obama, want a government shutdown? Let's ask a few questions.

Why was it that a few months ago, after the election but before the new Congress took over, when the President had both Houses of Congress under the control of his party, why did he opt not to pass a full budget for fiscal year 2011? That was the first seed he sowed in the direction of a government shutdown. I submit it was one that was either irresponsible on the one hand or deliberate and malicious on the other, intending to bring about a sequence of events that would culminate inevitably in a government shutdown.

No. 2. Even after the new Congress convened, after the balance of power shifted completely in the House of Representatives and after a number of seats in this body shifted and the new Congress convened in January of this year, the President did not bring forward something that could attract both Houses of Congress to approve and that he could fund the government with for the balance of the year. He instead chose to operate on a series of continuing resolutions. We are now moving up against what I believe will be our seventh continuing resolution if it is passed. What we have from the President is radio silence in the direction of what we need to do to move forward.

A number of us have suggested all along in this process that at a point in time in America when we have a national debt approaching \$15 trillion, at a point in time when we are adding to that debt at a staggering rate approaching \$1.7 trillion a year, it does not make sense and it is not responsible to continue, even in small increments, perpetuating that degree of reckless, perpetual deficit spending.

What we want to see more than anything isn't any specific set of social issue legislation. It is not any specific degree of spending cuts. It is instead a plan, some plan that will move us in the direction of a balanced budget, that will put us on track so we might once again enjoy the benefits of a balanced budget, so we might again enjoy the